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Baga language

Baga, or **Barka**, is a dialect cluster spoken by the Baga people of coastal Guinea. The name derives from the phrase *bae raka* 'people of the seaside'. Most Baga are bilingual in the Mande language Susu, the official regional language. Two ethnically Baga communities, Sobané and Kaloum, are known to have abandoned their (unattested) language altogether in favour of Susu.

Baga	
	Barka
Native to	Guinea
Ethnicity	Baga
Native speakers	(undated figure of 13,000, possibly the ethnic population)[1]
Language family	Niger–Congo ▪ Atlantic–Congo ▪ Mel ▪ Temne ▪ Baga languages ▪ **Baga**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Variously: `bgo` – Koga `bsp` – Sitemu `bmd` – Mandari `bqf` – Kaloum (spurious) `bsv` – Sobané (spurious)
Glottolog	`temn1245 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/temn1245)` adds Temne & Landoma[2]

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Varieties

The varieties as distinct enough to sometimes be considered different languages.[3] They are:

Baga Koga (Koba)
Baga Manduri (Maduri, Mandari)
Baga Sitemu (Sitem, Sitemú, Stem Baga, Rio Pongo Baga)

The extinct Baga Kaloum and Baga Sobané peoples spoken Koga and Sitemu, respectively.[4]

Neighboring Baga Pokur is not closely related.

Geographical distribution

Geographical distribution of Baga varieties, listed from north to south, by Fields-Black (2008:85):[5]

- *Baga Mandori*: coast of Guinea, north of the mouth of the Nunez River
- *Baga Sitem*: coast of Guinea, south of the mouth of the Nunez River
- *Baga Kakissa*: coast of Guinea, north of the mouth of the Pongo River
- *Baga Koba*: coast of Guinea, from south of the mouth of the Pongo River to north of the mouth of the Konkouré River
- *Baga Kalum*: Îles de Los and area surrounding Conakry

Noun Class Systems

Baga has prefixes for eight noun classes:[3]

Variety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Baga Maduri	*o-* or none	*a-*	*a-*	*i-*	*kə-*	*da-*	*cə-*	*sə-*
Bagu Sitemu	*wi-* or none	*a-*	*a-*	none	*kə-*	*da-*	*cə-*	*sə-*
Baga Koba	*i-*	*a-*	*a-*	*ɛ-*	*kə-*	*da-*	*cə-*	*sə-*

Vocabulary

All these are from *Baga Maduri*:[3]

- *aceen* - dog
- *iceen* - dogs
- *alomp* - fish
- *asɔɔp* - pig
- *atɔf* - earth, land
- *daboomp da-ka-obɛ* - the chief's head
- *daboomp da-wana* - the cow's head
- *dafɔr* - eye
- *dasek* - tooth
- *isek* - teeth
- *gbak* - hang
- *kəca* - hand, arm
- *waca* - hands, arms
- *kufoon* - hair
- *mun* - drink
- *tafac* - iron
- *gbup* - turn onto front

References

1. Koga (https://www.ethnologue.com/15/show_language/bgo) at *Ethnologue* (15th ed., 2005) Sitemu (https://www.ethnologue.com/15/show_language/bsp) at *Ethnologue* (15th ed., 2005) Mandari (https://www.ethnologue.com/15/show_language/bmd) at *Ethnologue* (15th ed., 2005)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Northern Mel" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/temn1245). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. W.A.A.Wilson, *Temne, Landuma and the Baga Languages* in: *Sierra Leone Language Review, No. 1, 1962* published by Fourah Bay College, Freetown.
4. Hammarström (2015) Ethnologue 16/17/18th editions: a comprehensive review: online appendices

5. Fields-Black, Edda L. 2008. *Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora*. (Blacks in the Diaspora.) Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Further reading

- Houis, Maurice (1952) 'Remarques sur la voix passive en Baga', *Notes Africaines*, 91–92.
- Houis, Maurice (1953) 'Le système pronominal et les classes dans les dialectes Baga, i carte', *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, 15, 381–404.
- Mouser, Bruce L. (2002) 'Who and where were the Baga?: European perceptions from 1793 to 1821', *History in Africa*, 29, 337–364.

External links

- Link to ELAR documentation of Baga Madori (https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI285343)

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